

Article, December 1871

REPORT OF A COMMITTEE ON THE NEW METHOD OF INSTRUCTION FOR DEAF-MUTES, DECEMBER, 1871 (published in “The Boston Daily Advertiser”).

On Wednesday last, an examination took place in the school for deaf-mutes at 11 Pemberton Square, of several pupils, deaf and dumb, who had been for three months under the instruction of Mr. A. Graham Bell. The effects produced by this instruction are in the highest degree wonderful; indeed, almost miraculous. Several girls have been taught to utter distinctly all the sounds of the language; and one of them pronounced accurately words offered by gentlemen present, from a European and from an Oriental language, containing strange sounds not belonging to our language. Another, Miss Flagg, recited in a sweet and natural manner, with all the inflections and modulations that a well-taught hearing-girl could have given, a comic quarrel between a husband and wife, about “Is it a thrush, or a starling?”

At the end of the examination, Hon. Mr. Philbrick, superintendent of the Boston schools, was requested by a unanimous vote to take measures to procure a hall sufficiently large to accomodate a much larger audience, and to arrange for a future meeting; and another committee was chosen to report the perfect success of Mr. Bell's methods, and to invite all persons, especially those interested in the marvellous powers of the human voice, and those who wish to see for themselves the original scientific methods by which he can bestow upon those from whom it has been withheld the power of communicating their thoughts and feelings by the use of the human voice divine; that every mother who has never heard her child speak may hope to hear it in a pleasant natural voice.

Mr. Bell is the son of the gentleman in London, Prof. A. Melville Bell, who first, by unwearied experiments on the organs of speech, invented what he calls “Visible Speech”, — an invention which promises to give complete success to the art of teaching the

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deaf and dumb to speak. Mr. Bell began by giving a rapid account of the invention, and exhibited on the blackboard the characters of symbols devised, which are an imitation of the parts of the organs of speech used in the utterance of the several sounds. He then stated that the object of the experiments he had been making during the last three months had been to test the possibility of educating the mouths and voices of deaf-mutes. He introduced to us two young ladies who had during that time been under his instruction, — Miss Alice C. Jennings, daughter of the Rev. W. Jennings of Auburndale, and Miss Theresa Dudley, daughter of the Hon. L. J. Dudley of Northampton; and asked special attention to the latter, who is a congenital deaf-mute. She had been educated at home, at the institution at Hartford, Conn., and for four years under Miss Rogers, principal of the Clarke Institution, where she had been using her vocal organs.

In September, Superintendent Philbrick, Secretary White, Dr. Ira Allen, chairman of the Boston Schools for Mutes, and several other gentlemen had examined the condition of Miss Dudley's articulation, that Miss Rogers might have full credit for the very wonderful work she had accomplished, and that the improvement due to the principles of “visible speech” might be justly appreciated.

The defects had been shown to be in sounds of *o*, the consonants *w*, *r*, *l*, and in all the double consonants, indistinctness, and difficulty of understanding her conversation or reading.

Mr. Bell went on to say, “Miss Dudley has been under my instruction for three months. The improvement manifest may be emphatically summed up in the one word, ‘power’. She has obtained power over the instrument of speech, — such power that she can produce the elementary sounds of foreign languages, as well as those of English, by merely studying their symbols; that she can vary her voice

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Mr. Bell said that it will require long and patient practice of oral gymnastics before she is able to speak fluently; but he showed enough to prove that the end he is aiming at, perfect and pleasing articulation, is certain.

Committee.

George B. Emerson,

John D. Philbrick,

Lewis B. Monroe,

J. W. Churchill,